FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Volume 47, Number 4 August 1996

The mission of Fellowship in Prayer is to encourage and support a spiritual orientation to life, to promote the practice of prayer, meditation, and service to others, and to help bring about a deeper spirit of unity among humankind.

A Message from the President 2

From the Editor 4

Learning to Pray: An Interview with Roberta Bondi 6

The Law of Karma, *by Eknath Easwaran* 10

Looking Deeper, *by William Wilson* 14

"A Transforming Experience:" Relocating, *by Jean Newland* 19

Spirituality and the Family: Checkpoint Chorapki, *by Steve Colby* 21

The Authentic Life, *by Ronald Y. Nakasone* 29

New Poetry: In August, *by Jean Moreau* 37

Illuminations 38

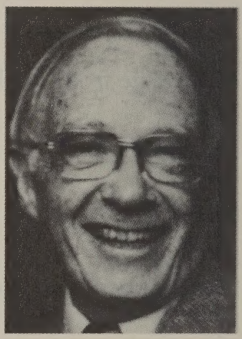
A Secret Reason for Being, *by Mary Bilderback* 39

Spirituality and Aging: Divine Assistance, *by Henry Stark* 41

A Prayer for the Summer, *by Lynn V. Andrews* 46

Letters and Links 48

Cover photo by Robert F. Campbell.



A while back we participated in a Christian meditation retreat weekend offered by Father Laurence Freeman, OSB, a Benedictine who directs the work of the World Community for Christian Meditation from his monastery in London.

Although Christianity has an ancient and rich tradition of meditation and the contemplative life, few of us know much about this work of love. So we asked Father Laurence, "What is the value of meditation?" "Well, for one thing," he said, "it makes us happier. Happiness is a fruit of meditation and contemplative prayer." "But in light of the terrible suffering in the world today," we said, "do we have a right to be happy?" "Not only a right," said Father Laurence, "but a duty. The old idea was that the more suffering we endure, the closer we come to God. But that is simply not so," Father Laurence told us.

The truth is, we are created in the image and likeness of God, the bliss and joy of God, and we are called to share in that bliss and joy. As Buddhists say, our true nature is Eternal, Joyous, Selfless, and Pure. And it is the duty of our nature to manifest that joyousness. What prevents us from doing so? Why do we deny the divine image in which we are created? Why do we so often refuse to accept and act out of our own essential goodness, the true source of our tremendous potential for happiness? The basic reason, of course, is that our secular culture trains us in the belief that happiness is the result of constantly acquiring more of the world's goods and pleasures. But our own experience tells us that's not true.

Happiness is the fruit of a certain orientation toward life—a view that sees the Beatitudes, for example, as more productive of happiness than, say, more power, possessions, or wealth. What's more, a spiritual orientation leads to an abiding concern for the welfare of others.

"Meditation and contemplation are not selfish undertakings," Father Laurence says. "At a certain level of your being," he

tells us, "you are not separate from me or from every human being who has ever lived or will live. So if you practice being happy, your happiness enriches the well-being of everyone else. We're not much use to anyone," Fr. Freeman points out, "if we're not happy ourselves." "How long might it take to meditate yourself into happiness?," we asked. "In the depths of meditation," he said, "the question itself dissolves."

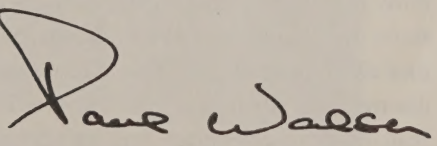
The Kingdom, the fullness of being that we call "happiness," is always in the present moment. Right here. Right now.

Meditation, day in and day out, can transform the way we handle the suffering and general unsatisfactoriness of life and help heal the split between the secular and the spiritual parts of our nature—the conflict between our heads and our hearts.

Meditation inevitably leads us into contemplation, the state in which we are totally liberated from greed and anger and jealousy, and all the anxieties and fears that keep us from being the essentially good, kind, loving and joyous people we are naturally. "Meditation purifies the heart," Father Laurence says, "so that we can see God."

This, then, is the work we are called to do: the work of contemplation, that is love. Contemplation doesn't lead to love. It *is* love. It is the discovery that at the depth of your being you are at one with your God, with yourself, with every sentient being in the universe.

"Whoever wants his or her life to be fully alive and fully human," says Father Laurence, "needs to follow a spiritual path," and the path he recommends is that of meditation. ■



Paul Walsh

"When all is said and done the gift we have to give is to be authentic for each other. We dip into our own lives and offer what we find there," writes Elizabeth O'Connor[1], one of my favorite writing sages. When I dip down deep into my own life, I find a lifelong awe of the workings of the Spirit. I was raised and remain in a Christian "holiness" denomination that stresses the importance of heeding the Spirit's leading and honoring the Spirit's power to reorder one's entire outlook. During my adult life, I've endeavored to train my eye toward perceiving the Spirit's movement and have learned anew that the Spirit, like the wind, "blows where it chooses." I've seen the Spirit in predictable places, such as, in the lives of my two sprite-like daughters, ages three and six. And I've noticed its holy disturbances in astounding situations, as in receiving an invitation to speak of "matters of the soul" with the hard-line communist government officials while on a humanitarian relief trip to the Chernobyl region before the fall of the former Soviet Union. Then and now the Spirit continues to surprise and enliven me.

This issue, sent to you in the harvest heat of August, compiles wisdom from others who actively dip deep to find spiritual sustenance. Roberta Bondi finds by delving into the spirituality of the desert fathers and mothers that God regards us "more mercifully than we regard ourselves." Eknath Eawsaran tells us we "reap what we sow"—that self-will leads to suffering and self-giving to vitality. William Wilson looks deeply, searchingly at a "being" of creation and learns to love fully. Jean Newland's *Transforming Experience* describes the seismic shifts in her soul caused by a geographical move. In our *Spirituality and the Family* feature Steve Colby craves spiritual adventure only to discover that the heart of the universe is grasped nearer to home. Poet Jean Moreau celebrates August's "wobbly butterfly" and "slippery sunlight" while Mary C. Bilderback views a spider at church and admires its handiwork. Ronald Nakasone speaks of the "uncompromising honesty" that is the hallmark of truly authentic lives. Henry Stark

---

[1] *Letters to Scattered Pilgrims, by Elizabeth O'Connor, 1979. Harper SanFrancisco.*

unleashes the power of divine healing through meditation. And finally, Lynn Andrews, invokes the "Great Mother" in the hope of restoring balance to the earth.

Many of you draw from deep wellsprings in your own souls. We want to benefit from your experiences. Put your wisdom on paper. If you've had a transforming experience, share it with our readers. You need not be a professional writer. Write to me for writers guidelines if you want further details. And keep dipping—what you find there is worth sharing! ■

Rebecca Laird

Rebecca Laird

An Interview with Roberta C. Bondi

In her work as a church historian Roberta C. Bondi has sought to make the wisdom of the early church and the insights of monastic spirituality available to contemporary Christians. Her books To Pray and To Love *and* To Love as God Loves *(both from Augsburg Fortress) explore the life of prayer as exemplified by Christian monks of ancient Egypt.*

Many of us feel we ought to pray more than we do, but we often find praying difficult, or something we are uneasy about. Why do you think this is?

I can think of three kinds of obstacles that get in the way of prayer. The first is that for many of us in mainline Protestant traditions—and for many Catholics too, I'm discovering, prayer is not something we have been allowed to talk about at home or in church. It is regarded as an embarrassing topic, and a private topic. People who are not intimidated in any other area of their lives are intimidated by the idea of prayer. We are especially intimidated when people announce themselves as experts in prayer—and there are those who take the "I will tell you how to do it" approach.

Another problem is that we relate to God in terms of duty. There are liberal and conservative versions of this, but it comes to the same thing. The prevalence of "ought" and "should" language kills a lot of relationships with God. Nobody wants to be around someone whom you relate to only in terms of duty. I'm willing to relate to people that way some of the time, but don't expect me to want to do it. But for the monastic teachers of the early church, with whom I've spent a lot of time, a relationship with God is one of desire and delight. This is really a different basis for prayer.

The third thing that gets in the way of prayer is the images of God that we carry around, and which govern our hearts. We can have an image of God as a terrifying or judgmental being. In that case, perhaps, for some of us, not being able to pray is itself a gift of grace. Our ideas of God often come from when we were little, and they are associated with authority figures. Churches may reinforce the vision of God as a judge or as one who is interested in us only when we're bad. You can see this in the way we sometimes talk about the "will of God"

Copyright 1996 Christian Century Foundation. Abridged and reprinted by permission from the March 20-27, 1996, issue of the Christian Century.

for our lives. The "will of God" almost always has negative content to it. What God wants is definitely not going to be what we want.

Perhaps those people are acknowledging, or attempting to acknowledge, that God's will is not always our will.

Our theology may tell us that God wants something different from what we want, but we rarely go on to ask, What is it that God does want? God desires the thriving and wholeness of the human race. I mostly hear about the "will of God," however when people are considering why a baby drowned in a swimming pool and that kind of thing. The point being made is usually that God's ways are inscrutable, and we get hurt in the process.

Let's go back to the obstacles to prayer: Do you think people are also theologically and philosophically uncertain about what prayer is? For example, they wonder if prayer is essentially an inner monologue, in which case it might be better termed "meditation." On the other hand, if they think prayer is a dialogue with God, they're often not sure what it means to have God respond—and they are uneasy with people who speak confidently about what God has revealed to them.

We are so verbal, especially in the Protestant tradition, that it's hard for us not to imagine prayer either as monologue, in which I tell God things and God listens, or as a conversation in which I tell God things and God answers back. But from what I understand out of the ancient monastic materials I work on, prayer is really an entire relationship, and the verbal part is only one element. A lot of what we learn when we pray is to be quiet. We need to stop thinking that a relationship is constituted only by language. The closer we get to other people, and the better our friendships are, the more silence these relationships contain. The people we talk to all the time are probably the people we don't know terribly well and whom we don't trust. The issue is no so much "Does God talk back and if so how?" but whether we can learn just to be in God's presence.

Intercession is a large part of prayer, and here again uncertainties arise. When we pray for other people—for the homeless, for those who are ill, for those suffering in Bosnia—we may think, Well, this is in God's hands anyway, isn't it? What is the point of my prayer?

The question of intercessory prayer is really an interesting one, because it raises the issue of what we want from prayer. It seems to me that one of the aims of prayer is to grow in friendship with God. If this is the case, then let's consider what constitutes a friendship, and then try to pray in accordance with that. One of the things about friends is that they want the same thing for each other. Not that they necessarily both want ice cream at the same time, but that the well-being of one person is tied to the well-being of the other. This doesn't just mean that God wants what we want, but that we want what God wants out of friendship for God. This is a basis for intercessory prayer. If God's deepest longing is for the well-being of the world, then God wants the well-being of Bosnia, and we pray for that out of friendship with God.

Another thing about friends is that they speak their minds to each other. When friends don't tell each other what they have on their minds, it destroys the friendship. This is another grounds for intercessory prayer. It doesn't matter that God already knows everything. For the sake of friendship, God needs us to say what we want. Whether we get it or not is a different matter. You don't always get what you ask for from your friend—maybe most of the time you don't get it—but you need to say what it is you need and want.

It's already clear from your comments as well as from your writing that your encounter with the spirituality of the desert fathers and mothers has been crucial—intellectually, theologically and spiritually. Can you tell us about this encounter?

There is so much involved that it's hard to summarize. I do remember clearly coming across a sixth-century homily which said that we ought to go easy on one another, and not judge one another, because God regards us so much more mercifully than we regard one another, and more mercifully than we regard ourselves. This was a mind-boggling, revolutionary idea for me. It struck me

that if this is true, then God isn't a terrifying person I need to stay away from.

Were you at all inclined to say that these sixth-century folk had it wrong, or did it ring true?

It rang so true that it completely undid me. It didn't even occur to me that it might be wrong. I really regarded that as the moment when I became Christian. What I couldn't do for several years was assimilate this truth. Because if this were true, many other things that I believed couldn't be true. And I had to work through those other things—which had to do with being female, and learning that I really am made in the image of God, that God really does have a preference for the oppressed and the outcast.

This was before the advent of the women's movement. I had all these parts of myself that did not go with being feminine in the early '60's and mid-'60's, and I was doing everything I could to discard those parts of myself. These were good things about myself that I was trying to get rid of. It took me a while to recognize that God didn't see me in the same way I saw myself, but saw me through much gentler eyes.

How did this realization affect your approach in prayer?

Like a lot of people, I had thought that if you turned everything over to the Lord, you would be at peace. So I had expectations about prayer that ran quite contrary to what else was going on in my life. One of the important things I learned from the fathers and mothers, the Abbas and Ammas, is that prayer is a lifelong process. Friendship with God is the goal, not the starting point. I also learned that prayer is the process of in-gathering all the parts of ourselves that we don't want. It's quite common for us to think that we are to enter God's presence only when we're worthy. But what God is interested in is our bringing our whole self into the relationship.

One of my favorite sayings of the monastics is that prayer is warfare to the last breath. Prayer is hard work—and painful a lot of the time because it makes us face parts of ourselves and accept parts of ourselves that we'd rather not. ■

The Law of Karma

EKNATH EASWARAN

Does selfishness always lead to sorrows? Does caring always lead to joy? A great contemporary spiritual teacher blends Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian wisdom in a modern approach to the law of Karma.

Many years ago, when I was still a Fulbright scholar at the University of California, Berkeley, I gave a talk on meditation to some hard-headed Kaiser Aluminum executives in Oakland. After I finished, one of these men came up and said, "You know, we Americans are scientifically minded, and it goes against the grain when you talk about spiritual 'laws.' These are just beliefs, and we Westerners don't necessarily subscribe to them. Shouldn't you say something vaguer, like 'spiritual principles'?"

I motioned him over to a big plate-glass window where we could look down from the Kaiser building onto Lake Merritt, hundreds of feet below. "Would you like to see something spectacular?" I asked. "I'm going to soar out of this window and take a spin around the lake."

"Don't do it!" he said, grabbing my arm in alarm. "Haven't you heard of the law of gravity?"

"I've heard of it," I agreed, "but I don't subscribe to it, so it has no effect on me. After all, it's not a Hindu law."

"Whether you believe it or not," he retorted, "the law of gravity works."

"Similarly," I said, "whether anyone believes in it or not, the law of karma works. If you live in harmony with it, it will support you. But just as with gravity, if you go against it, you have to expect some painful, predictable consequences."

The law of karma is central to Hindu and Buddhist thought, but it is not a tenet of any religion; it is a law of life. No one has expressed it more succinctly than Jesus: "As ye sow, so shall ye reap."

Put universally, the law of karma expresses the central truth that all of life is one. This means that, just as in physics, everything is

Eknath Easwaran, founder and director of the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation in Petaluma, CA, has been teaching meditation and the classics of world mysticism to an American audience for over a quarter of a century. Among his many books are Conquest of Mind, Mantram Handbook, Dialogue With Death, Gandhi the Man, and Meditation: An Eight Point Program.

interconnected, from the world of things to the world of thoughts.

Everything we do or say or even think has consequences, good or bad, according to whether we have acted in harmony with the rest of life or at odds with it. When we act in such a way that others benefit from our action, we too reap some of the benefit, for we are part of the whole. But if we do something at cost to others, we reap some of the costs ourselves as well. Put bluntly, selfish behavior has painful consequences, if not immediately, then in the fullness of time.

It is worth stressing that this punishment need not be regarded as meted out by some external Lawgiver. As the Buddha would say, anger is its own punishment. Selfishness is its own punishment. God is within us, and when we suffer the consequences of selfish behavior—emotional problems, estrangement, alienation, ill health—it is we who are punishing ourselves.

We associate God with love, so we find it difficult to understand that a certain amount of suffering in life is not only inescapable but even necessary for growth. In fairness, the conditioning of pleasure and personal satisfaction is so strong that without making mistakes and learning from them, I think very few human beings can be expected to understand where selfish desires lead. The tragedy is not our making mistakes, but making mistakes without learning from them. Suffering is a simple guidepost on the road of life, meant to keep us from running into a disastrous end.

> When we open our hearts to the needs of those around us, we get the equivalent of a divine pat on the back: increasing health, vitality, security, and self-respect.

It took me a long time to understand this, though my spiritual teacher, my grandmother, tried to teach me very early in life. When I made a mistake and suffered for it, she would not be very sympathetic. She didn't gloat over my suffering or withdraw her support, but in wordless ways, mostly by her own example, she helped me to learn not to make that mistake again.

At the time, I didn't understand what seemed a strange lack of sympathy from one who loved me so deeply. Today I know that if

Robert F. Campbell

someone has been behaving selfishly, it is much better for that person to suffer the consequences and learn to change than it is to remain blind and fail to grow.

Without this painful aspect of the unity of life, unfortunately, few of us would grow. It is not much of a compliment to human nature, but most of us do not learn from pleasure; we learn from making mistakes and suffering the consequences.

Every day I see the verification of the law of karma. Ill health is often an instance: if we do not take care of our body and maintain our peace of mind, our health is bound to suffer. When our digestion is upset, our equanimity is destroyed; it is often a signal, a warning from body and mind, reminding us that something fundamental in our life is wrong. Pain, illness, insecurity, and mental turmoil can all be loving signals from God within, who is telling us, "It's time you gave yourself a checkup. Something you're doing isn't right."

Today, with our psychological orientation, we may want to object, "But that's not fair! All our biological conditioning tells us to look out for number one. Do we have to suffer the consequences of unconscious drives over which we have no control?"

Here we see God's infinite compassion. On the one hand, a law is a law. Selfish behavior has to have consequences. We need to understand and accept that, just as when we let go of a ball in midair, we know it has to fall.

Yet despite this, we do have a choice in how we act. That is what it means to be human. The burden of selfish conditioning, which everyone bears in some measure, begins to fall away when we heed the signposts of suffering and live for others rather than ourselves.

In this way, we learn the lesson that suffering has to teach. Once this lesson is learned completely, the mystics of all religions say, it serves no further purpose. Suffering is an educational tool, a learning device. When we realize the unity of life, personal suffering comes to an end.

Every religion teaches the same lesson: do not follow self-will; it will only lead to sorrow. When we live just for ourselves, riding roughshod over others' feelings to get what we want, life itself will ensure that we get increasing insecurity, ill health, and loneliness; there is no other way of awakening our sensitivity.

In the end, then, there is nothing fantastic about the law of karma. Rightly understood, nothing is more positive, for it brings every possibility of spiritual growth into our own hands. ■

Looking Deeper

WILLIAM WILSON

English mystic, Julian of Norwich, found the universe unfolded as she gazed upon the wonder of a simple hazelnut. Likewise a modern-day contemplative finds looking deeper into the wonders of a small object teaches him of the essence of truly loving.

When I entered the monastery, I was just a boy of nineteen. Truly, the experience of God alone made monastic life worthwhile, as in the early days, the human regimen of life was miserable. The lumpy straw mattress, the two ounces of dry bread and coffee for breakfast, the once weekly shower, the imposed silence among the community, left little to make me feel good about what I was accomplishing with my life.

My years as a Trappist were very busy, even activist. Eight times a day we went to church for the Divine Office and mass. Three times to the dining hall. One early meeting for Chapter, another for common evening reading. Twice a day into the fields or workshops. To this you added, at your own discretion, one or two visits to the library, and private devotions such as the rosary, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, visits to the cemetery, and the Stations of the Cross. My personal regime, during those years, included them all. There was a thirty minute period of silent prayer in church for all the monks together in the morning, five minutes at noon, and fifteen minutes after Vespers in the evening. Beyond that, there was very little time left for quiet, still, contemplative prayer.

There was no personal solitude either. We slept together in dormitories, by twenties and thirties. We worked together, ate together, prayed together, studied together. We were never alone. Of course, we were never really with anyone either. Remember, speaking was not permitted and friendships were not allowed.

So a person with an inclination to solitary quest for God and personal interior contemplation was hard pressed to find the circumstances to do it. The more contemplatively inclined brothers found ways and places.

William Wilson is an Episcopal priest, a former Roman Catholic. After twenty-five years as a Trappist monk, he spent seven years in Bolivia where he founded Amistad Mission, an outreach to destitute Quechua natives and abandoned children. He is married to Dr. Susan Winchester Wilson, a general surgeon.

This is one way I found. At the sound of the bell ending the afternoon work period, I'd hurry away by myself. I had found a little moveable wooden bench. I put this bench in an outdoor, out-of-sight corner formed by the wall of our neo-gothic church and one of its buttresses. There I could be relatively alone and unnoticed until the bell would summon me into church for Vespers.

To increase my concentration, eliminate distractions, and to enhance my solitude, I put the hood of my great-sized monastic cowl over my head. My visual field was like peering out at the world through a short, misshapen stovepipe. Buried in my cowl, feet and knees together, shoulders slumped, head bowed, right back-hand in left palm on my lap, I would hold a little something in the hollow of my right hand. Sometimes I chose a pebble, or a piece of bark, or a hazelnut, or a dead leaf...almost anything would do. Then I would just gaze at it. While my eyes gazed at the lowly entity, my mind received it in knowing, and my heart affirmed it in love. I may have appeared to be resting or even asleep for I was completely motionless, but I was really very busy looking intently at the little thing in my hand, knowing it and willing it. So was God who was there creating it. I joined God in enjoying this small expression of the divine self. Something in me, some part of my mind other than my sense faculties, knew the *being* of the thing in my hand. Beyond its feel, smell, and appearance, knew its existence. In knowing its existence, I was knowing God, the Author of existence. God was loving this tiny being into existence. And I

> How wonderful it is to know the All in just about anything, and to find the Infinitely Great in the infinitesimally small.

sat there, quietly happy, watching God do it! Right in my hand. God creating a hazelnut, and the entire universe with it! And in my heart there God was, even at that moment, breathing me into reality along with the object in my hand and all the stars and all that is. We are, all existent beings, twins...born into being together by the one creative breath of God-Love. My brother the sun, my sister the moon, my friend this hazelnut, my beloved twin the universe of existent beings. These are the things I knew and felt as I looked at a hazelnut in the hollow of my hand. It filled me. I was satisfied. Happy. How won-

derful it is to know the All in just about anything, and to find the Infinitely Great in the infinitesimally small! A full generation has passed since then. I am 59. Fifteen years ago, without quite realizing what I was doing, I began to return to the world. Before the monastery, I had never "lived" in the world. I had only, barely, survived there. Now I live on an average street in an average city. I have work, bills, and a car, all about average. I pay taxes, am deluged with junk mail, and watch too much TV!

Eight years ago I received a person into my life in a definitive/ultimate way. I knew her, I loved her, I married her. Susan. I do not yet completely know how to be her husband and friend. Superficially and overall, we seem to be getting along progressively better. But that cannot be all there is to married love.

What do life and the God of life, have in mind for those who marry? Sexual completion, yes. Companion-friendship, certainly. Partnership in creating and sustaining family, that too. These physical responsibilities and benefits of marriage are fairly clear. Is that all there is to it?

I think there is something more inward and profound to being married. The expression of divinity that I once found in a hazelnut, a twig, or a leaf, I am to find more fully in my bride. In every way I know her. In every touch of her. Every sight of her. Every sound.

I took the initiative to experience God by holding pebbles, leaves, and twigs in my hands, but they were first provided by God. How much greater than pebble or leaf is a person? The One who provided a pebble has provided a person. Susan was a gift to me. God reaches down to me through her. God made her God's messenger, the angel of divine presence in my life. Susan has become to me the most splendorous place of contact with God. She is a sacred tryst where this sinful mortal one is embraced by that Holy Immortal One.

Marrying Susan gives interpersonal expression and incarnate concreteness to my love of God and of everything in the universe. All things are in God and God is in Susan. In some transcendental way, then, all things are in my bride, although loving her is not an alternative to loving God in all creatures.

Loving my wife, unlike loving those tiny creatures, requires a continual ascetic struggle against the lethargy and subtle aggression that flow so spontaneously, almost unconsciously, from my old self-

ish ego. Pebbles and twigs do not notice these movements within me. Susan is aware of them, even before I am.

A hazelnut has no selfish ego set over against my own. It makes no movement. It neither feels nor arouses desire. It takes no flight, makes no defense, offers no resistance. A person does. A twig is not frightened by nor frightening to me. It does not want anything from me. Susan does all these things.

Here, then, is what I believe to be the greatest challenge for spouses who would look more deeply into each other to see God. We must quiet the wants, fears, desires, and the conditions imposed by our selfish ego—that false self. Then, from our own still center, we will be able to look deeper into the eyes of our beloved and behold God indwelling and self-revealing from her still center.

A little bit, for a blessed moment, on graced occasions, without fear or desire toward her, I look upon the divine goodness she expresses beneath her fears and desires. My God-filled deep calls to Susan's God-filled deep. ■

Relocating

JEAN NEWLAND

A geographical move forces a seismic shift in this woman's inner life.

Any relationship with God is an adventure, an excursion, a journey—and it began in earnest as a result of a move to Salt Lake City, Utah, over twenty years ago.

I was a young wife and mother of small children. Due to my husband's position, we had been transferred to Utah from California, my home state, in the first of what would be a series of moves to various parts of the country. Though I missed friends and family, we were finding stimulation and excitement in living in new and surprisingly lovely surroundings and in learning something about the clean, rugged beauty of that place—and the fascinating culture, so strongly influenced by the Mormon church.

Mine was a full life, enriched by a good marriage to a fine, loving man. We had two bright, healthy, beautiful children. I had returned to school in pursuit of a university degree. There were lots of activities—social, church, scouting, and sports with the kids. Yes, my life was full yet I sensed an emptiness, a hollowness, an inexplicable yearning for completeness in spite of all my blessings. And I felt angry and guilty for having those feelings. I did not want this conflict. But that's where I was and denial only served to make the situation worse. Anxiety, worry, and depression became my companions.

In retrospect I realize that I had neglected some necessary tasks of maturation that would no longer wait. I had not paid attention to inner signals or to that still, small voice that had for some time been trying to get my attention. I kept busy instead. I had avoided some conflicts that needed to be resolved, some beliefs that needed to be challenged, some values that needed to be clarified, some questions that needed to be asked, some illusions that needed to be destroyed, and some decisions that needed to be made.

The move had precipitated this necessarily intense and sometimes painful encounter with myself, for I found I was without the

Jean Newland, Information Specialist at the Wharton School of Business, University of Pennsylvania, has five grandchildren and enjoys doll and shell collecting.

social structure of friends and family that had previously provided a sense of identity and confidence. I had depended upon that widely based social structure for support and sharing, and now when I needed strength or courage, I turned inward and came up empty!

I turned to God, and found nothing; I didn't know how to reach God. After years of routine lip service, years of ignoring the dynamic reality of a personal relationship with God, I'd lost contact. And so God's very existence became one of those things I challenged. There were some dark days.

Now it seems funny, ironic, really, but I remember that even through the doubt, I would pray: God if you are there, hang on to me! And that's what happened, for eventually the process of self-examination resulted in self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and peace.

I came to understand myself as a child of God, supported by perfect, everlasting and unconditional love. I learned that I must always honestly and squarely face internal, as well as external, difficulties, and I became intimately aware of God's presence within me and in the world around me. I realized that God cared about my struggles and would always meet me at my point of need.

There were several other moves, but I had gained the confidence and faith that enabled me to meet and enjoy the challenges involved. And now that we've been able to remain in one place for many years, the adventure continues. The journey now is an internal one, for as my roles change and my development continues, I find myself in a different place spiritually today than I was yesterday. And God is always there with me. God speaks to me in a million ways—through the well-ordered beauty of the natural world; through a chance remark; through unforseen opportunities to serve; through the hand of a friend stretched out in love, just when it's needed the most; through my own thought, creative, and intuitive processes; through the joy of joining my heart and voice with others in a celebration of God's love.

We are sojourners together, step by step, my Lord and I. ■

Checkpoint Chorapki

STEVE COLBY

Yearning to do great things for God is a natural spiritual impulse. This writer travels far to learn that the essential lessons of life are often learned closer to home.

Caleb never goes for the small rocks. The rock could be half his size, but his pudgy arms and legs hug it like a beach ball, and red-faced he heaves like some infant Conan. "The rock is too big for you," I'll say. But nothing will dissuade him. He is a man on a mission. He gets frustrated. He cries. Finally, I reached underneath the rock, and together we lift it, "Ta da!" I yell, and Caleb raises his arms in triumph, while the rock tumbles off my hand onto my foot. Ouch.

A year and half ago Caleb landed into our life like one of the rocks.

The day before Caleb was born I cried. I am ashamed to admit it, call it early mid-life crisis or whatever, but as I reflected on my life, I had accomplished no great thing. I was wonderfully married, had friends, had the privilege of working with enthusiastic college students, but could point to no significant contribution. Caleb would be born, and mixed with all the wonder and gratitude was also a sense of deep-seated fear: what stories of bravery and conquest would I tell Caleb while he sat on my knee? Perhaps it's because I grew up watching "Star Trek." To be on the bridge, to be Captain James T. Kirk, to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go—that must be truly living! But I married Carol Brady. Susie, my wife, grew up watching "The Brady Bunch." She dreamed of home, of family dinners and birthday celebrations and Christmas. Whatever the ailment, family togetherness was the solution for Susie. She put up with my star-gazing until it made me late for dinner. Then she'd try to tease me out of my malaise, a cross between Carol Brady and Engineer Scott, "Cap'n! Bout time ya beemed back to earth and 'elped ur wif wit er deehes!"

Steve Colby is a campus minister at U.C. (Santa Cruz) and C.F.U. (Monterey Bay). Mr. Colby's article is printed with permission of PRISM *magazine, where it appears in a slightly longer version.* PRISM *is the national magazine of Evangelicals for Social Action, 10 East Lancaster Avenue, Wynnewood, PA 19096.*

Then there was Caleb. Between staring with awe at his perfect hands and feet, diapering him, feeding him, burping him, trying to get him to sleep and coping with the fact that he didn't and we didn't, there was barely any time at all to be depressed. But I did my best.

The worst of it was, I was a campus minister. My job was to pray and give guidance to students, to direct them to God, and give them hope and direction for their lives. My words felt hollow. I felt like a hypocrite. Each time I sat down with a senior to talk about his future, I had to fight off the urge to ask, "What do you think I should do when I grow up?"

The week Caleb was born I met Svillen. He was a Bulgarian professor of linguistics visiting our university. He invited me to bring students from our Christian fellowship to come to his university in Bulgaria and have an exchange program. Tall, thirty-something, fluent in several languages (and several dead languages), he spoke English better than I did, had the ruffled hair and clothes of the professional bachelor, and wore a continual smirk, like life was always some irony waiting to happen. He pointed to Caleb and said, "You could leave him with his grandparents."

Obviously not a parent, I thought. "No, no, of course we would bring him."

Svillen raised one eyebrow. "You know, strap him on the back. We could make it work." We could?

I was quite thrilled by this prospect. Susie was not. She wouldn't say no outright, because she could see what it meant to me, but she tried to raise her concerns through questions. "Will there be a laundry machine there? Will we have a fridge? What about medical care?" She became filled with dread. I became filled with a trumpet fugue and King Henry the Fifth challenging his men to the impossible: "We few, we happy few!"

Susie saw my mind was made, so she counted diapers and mathematically figured how much formula we needed. I dreamed what God might do, how God would use us as a family to bless the Bulgarians, and saw student revival breaking across the country.

So six months later we went. Susie, Caleb, me, our luggage, crib, toys, formula and twelve boxes of diapers.

We flew eighteen hours. Caleb slept, ate, kicked the seat in

front of us, barfed chunky milk on Susie's shirt, upturned the food tray, got carried down the aisles while everyone cooed and gooed, got carried up and down the aisle crying while everyone, pasty-eyed, wished he would parachute out. I tried to sleep and dreamed I lived trapped in a cave with 100 people and an elephant. Susie's eyes grew red and she aged ten years. We arrived like the walking dead, smelling of ourselves, floated over to baggage claim, and watched the conveyor belt turn around and around and around.

Our luggage never arrived. Not defeated, we did what any good red-blooded American would do—we went out and bought underwear.

Svillen meets us at the airport wearing the same shirt he'd had on the last time I saw him. (Then I realized that I, too, would be wearing the same shirt for days.) Svillen takes us to lunch at a smoke-filled cafe. We sit in the non-smoking section (non-smoking is where everybody blows their smoke directly up instead of straight at you) and Svillen orders lunch for us: schnitzel and beer. Vesco, Svillen's best friend, flies through the door, apologizes for being late, sits down and lights a cigarette. He is an orthopedic surgeon, and as we are cutting into our schnitzels tells us he is late because he has just performed an emergency amputation. He orders chicken livers and listens to us tell the story of our trip.

"I am amazing!" he exclaims. I realize later he is saying 'I am amazed!' Vesco, I learned, taught himself English by reading *People* magazine.

"You have traveled far. You are heroes!" After only two days I feel he is right. I look for corroboration from Svillen. He says, one eyebrow raised, "I still don't see why you didn't just leave him with your parents."

The window to our room opens on a river gorge, homes and bungalows built up in steps along the sides. It is breathtaking, but we scarcely have a moment to take it in. Our daily schedule is as follows: breakfast is at 8 am, English classes begin at 9 am, lunch is at 1:30 pm, dinner at 7 pm, and schmoozing and cafe hopping is all in between. We are time-lapse photography—racing to get me ready, racing to get Susie ready, then Caleb ready, then fly out the door where we are stopped by the hotel clerk. She wears a grey smock, has her hair in a bun, and I could swear she is either Nurse Kratchet or she

moonlights for the Bulgarian KGB.

"*Dobar den*!" She stoops to play with Caleb's toes.

"*Dobar den*!" we say breathlessly. I check my watch: 8:15. Too late for breakfast, but if we hurry we can make it to class on time.

"*Kade e chorapki*?" she asks. We're in a hurry so we figure faster to smile and nod. Doesn't work.

"*Kade e chorapki*?" She points to his feet.

"Oh!" Susie says, "she's saying socks!"

"Oh, they're in my bag," she lies. We look for approval.

"*Shapka*?" she asks. Oh, great, *shapka*? The lady points to his head. Ah, hat! Susie's getting flustered. I'm keeping time. "It's also in the bag." I think her teeth are clenched but I'm not sure.

The lady straightens, smiles, and waves, "*Dovizhdaney*!'

We've made it through Checkpoint *Chorapki*.

"Geez! What was that about," Susie says. "It's 90 degrees out here, he doesn't even crawl let alone walk; what on earth does he need socks for?" A good question. This is one of Susie's "needs-to-vent-and-just-be-listened-to times." But I fail to recognize it and find myself defending the Comrade Kratchet's point of view. Different culture, blah, blah, blah. Susie begins to smolder.

Why did you bring us here God?

We're late to class and Caleb is asleep. Since we don't want to wake him Susie sits outside while I slip into class. He wakes up for the break, gets ogled, falls asleep for lunch, so he and Susie miss it while I join the others and play Frisbee. Caleb times his nap for dinner, so I don't see them until 9 pm when I bring a plate of food for Susie (albeit cold), feeling all husbandly and chivalrous.

The woman who meets me at the door is not the woman I married, but rather, the Medusa—so much silent fire in her you can see the flames of wrath dance in her eyes, her hair twists around like snakes, her fists are clenched and ready to land on something.

I struggle with what exactly to say at this point. Clearly, "How was your day?" is out. "I see you are feeling angry," sounds patronizing. Soon I realize, of course, there is nothing to say and I turn to stone.

"Didn't you think I maybe wanted to come to dinner?"

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

First Class Permit No. 50 Princeton, N.J.

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08542-9946

The suggested donation for a year of *Fellowship in Prayer* is $16.00. Many readers, however, send more than that amount as a way of becoming a "Spiritual Friend" to those unable to contribute (especially men and women in hospitals, nursing and old age homes, and religious institutions).

In addition to sending in your own contribution and request to receive *FIP,* won't you become a "Spiritual Friend" to someone in need? You will earn their lasting gratitude—and ours.

☐ I enclose $16.00 ($22.00 for foreign subscriptions). Please send *FIP* to me:

(name) _____

(street) _____

(city, state, zip) _____

☐ Renewal ☐ New Listing

☐ I enclose $ _____. Please send a gift subscription to:

(name) _____

(street) _____

(city, state, zip) _____

☐ I enclose $ _____ . Please send *FIP* to someone in need, or use it to promote the practice of prayer and meditation.

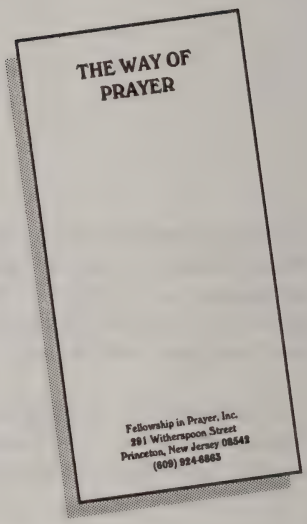
☐ Please remove my name from your mailing list.

Please use the back of this sheet for your comments.

The Way of Prayer answers the questions of many readers who have asked us specific questions about prayer: When, where, and how to pray; what to pray for; what you can expect from prayer; how to form a prayer group.

Copies are $2.00 each. Now in its 3rd printing, *The Way of Prayer* has clearly filled a widely-felt need.

☐ Please send me _____ copies of *The Way of Prayer.* I enclose my check for $_____.



* * * * * * *

What would you like to tell us about your spiritual needs, desires, experiences? About *Fellowship in Prayer*? Use the space below!

There it is. She's mad about missing dinner. But I brought dinner to her!

"Well, Susie, I just thought that you'd come if you wanted to." When that left my lips I knew I was in trouble.

"If I wanted to! Don't you realize that Caleb's slept through every meal, including class! I haven't seen or talked to anyone all day! I've barely left this stupid room since we got here!"

Then my mind imagines her day. I see her pacing back and forth, spending the tedious hours alone with Caleb while I was out frolicking. I mouth my regrets but they feel inadequate.

"How could you be so inconsiderate? I wish we'd never come here!" she bursts out. Later she tells me she didn't mean it, but it stays with me for days.

Why did you bring us here God? I have a hard time going to sleep. I console myself thinking there surely is a reason, that in fact this present suffering means there must be something pretty exciting ahead. I dream I'm a gambler at a roulette table going farther and farther into debt. My friends all tell me to stop for God's sake. My Mom comes forward and calls me by my full name and tells me to stop. But I stack all I have on the same exact number I've been playing and yell, "LET IT RIDE!" People gasp and friends murmur their admiration because I risked it all and won.

Real friendship and communication happen in Bulgaria between the hours of 10 pm and 4 am. Susie and I go to bed at 10 pm. We realize that the program has a life of its own and that we are not in it. We could have stayed home, e-mailed and felt more involved. So we console ourselves by going out for ice cream, playing Scrabble, and looking to the weekend outing to Rilo monastery as a time to get more involved.

Susie has perked up, but I am feeling more sullen. I feel out of place, out of sync, the question of our purpose here haunts me, churns my insides with a private anger I didn't know I had.

The night before the outing I send Susie to dinner while I watch Caleb. She's been cooped up for five days and gladly goes out like she's going on a date.

Caleb wakes up from a nap an hour later crying. And he doesn't stop crying. My nerves are jangled and my heart is racing. Something is seriously wrong. I start praying *Oh, Jesus, heal my son.*

Caleb is having trouble swallowing. It seems to take a major effort for him to swallow, then when he does, he screams in inconsolable agony. His voice is hoarse from crying. Somewhere along the line I have begun crying too.

I shoot prayers like bullets to God—*God you s.o.b. why don't you do something*?

The anger itself seems to blast the wings off my prayers. I wonder, is this why God brought us here? Is he making Caleb pay for my presumption? And suddenly I imagine we are all in an operating room, Caleb under a tent, tubes coming from him. Then we're at his grave side, his small coffin down in the hole, grief welling-up in me, accusing eyes saying, "And you, some father! Taking a little child to Bulgaria!"

Quickly I grab Caleb and we race off to find Susie. She stands up alarmed when she sees me. Fortunately Vesco is there and he takes a look at Caleb.

After a frightening moment he says, "He has a bad cold." He prescribes antibiotics, liquids, rest, and that we avoid drafts at all costs. Certainly the weekend trip is out.

Susie and I breathe our thanks and walk quietly home.

While I am relieved that Caleb is O.K., I am still raw with anger. A chasm has opened up inside of me. And as I stare down into this pit I see my life, my years as a campus minister, all the work I have done that has fallen short, my despicable mediocrity. And I see that this summer too is all just vanity, a useless striving after wind. I have put my family at risk for no cause. The program will go on cheerfully without us. They will go on their outing while we remain at home with Caleb.

We make do. We play Scrabble. We wash our clothes in buckets and then hang them out to dry. We watch in misery as the rains come down and re-wash our clothes. We drink beer and eat chocolate. Susie makes the best of it. I stew.

Two nights later sounds of gunfire and explosions wake us with a start. What is it? A revolution? I stumble sleepy-eyed into the motel lobby. The students have returned. They all sit together, with Svillen and Vesco, and keep vigil in front of the TV set.

World Cup Soccer. Bulgaria vs Germany in the quarter finals. Soccer? Soccer woke me from a dead sleep? And as if on cue, I can

hear the faintest cry in the background—Caleb has awakened too.

The chasm opens again. A seething rage boils up within me. I contemplate a secret revenge, the greatest sin I can muster. I pray one focused vicious prayer, *Oh Lord, let the Bulgarians lose.*

Praying for Germany over Bulgaria is like praying for Goliath against David. Germany won the previous World Cup and was heavily favored to win again. Bulgaria? The fact that they even got to play Germany was a miracle to many.

The students gasp, cheer, and sigh, each in fervent prayer for the great underdogs. I lean in against all their prayers with mine. An indirect kick, the ball soars over the heads of an impossible wall of Germans, curves into the corner of the net—GOAL! A deafening eruption, spontaneous dancing breaks out, hugging and kissing like New Year's—Bulgaria has won.

The party throngs about me, but I am not there.

Caleb's cry draws me back down to the room. Susie is tired, she hands me Caleb and goes back to bed. I put an extra sleeper and hat on Caleb and walk out.

By now the party has poured out into the streets and heads to the center of town. In the lobby I see the Chorapki Lady, her arms folded blocking the way.

Oh, no, not tonight. Please not tonight.

"*Dober vecher,*" she says, her look makes me realize how insane we look—a father taking a young sick child into the cold night. "*Dober vecher.*"

"*Chorapki*?"

"*Chorapki,*" I parrot back like an army private, pointing to his sleepered feet.

"*Shapka*?" Can't she see it?

"*Shapka.*" I point to his head.

"*Odeyalo,*" Uh oh, I don't know this word. "*Odeyalo,*" I said hoping to mouth it and simply get by.

"*Odeyalo,*" she is insistent, giving me her secret police stare.

I shrug.

"*Studeno*! *Odeyalo*!" Look, lady, I haven't the slightest — She turns heel and leaves me in my confusion. Promptly she returns with a blanket. It's white cotton and embroidered in the middle in red is "Caleb."

She smiles and I realize I haven't seen her teeth yet. They are a mess.

I don't know what to say. "*Blagodaria*," I finally manage and wrap the blanket around Caleb.

"*Dobre*," she says and pats my shoulder. "*Dobre Dadko.*"

Stunned I walk with Caleb into the cool night. This is not what I expected from the Herr General Chorapki. What possessed her to do that?

"Good Dad," she has said to me.

Caleb looks up at me, eyes wide open, as if to say, "You mean we get to go outside?"

"Yes, Caleb," I answer. "It's Father-Son night out."

We walk up and down the street. We can hear fireworks and yelling and melodies of celebration from downtown. We look at the moon, we look at the stars, a kitty cat comes up to say hello, we pick up a pebble and throw it down into the river. Caleb wants to examine the cracks in the sidewalk. We look at our reflections in the storefront glass.

Caleb snuggles in and falls asleep against my neck. I clutch the universe closer to me and walk back home. ■

The Authentic Life

RONALD Y. NAKASONE

This writer uncovers "uncompromising honesty" as the key to authentic living that is abundantly evident in the lives of Jesus and Siddhartha.

> The fragrance of a flower does not float against the wind; but the honor of a good man goes even against the wind in the world.
> *The Teaching of the Buddha*

In 1994 Easter Sunday and *Kanbutsu-e*, Buddha's Birth Celebration, fell on the same day, April 8. On Easter Sunday, Christians throughout the world attended their respective churches to renew their faith in Jesus and their Christian faith. They gathered to honor an individual who spiritually transformed their lives. On April 8, Buddhists of the northern tradition celebrate the birth of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha. Buddhists came together to call into remembrance a person who changed the manner in which we have come to view the world and how we have come to think of ourselves. Celebrating these two lives on the same day made me reflect on the lives of Jesus and Siddhartha. Jesus and Buddha attracted people to their teachings because of their personal integrity. They lived the authentic life; they lived as they believed.

In a short story, "Not Far from Buddhahood," by Paul Reps, an exchange is related between Gasan, a Meiji Period (1866-1912) Zen teacher, and a university student. The student asks, "Have you ever read the Christian Bible?" "No, read it to me," replies Gasan. The student read the following from the Book of Matthew.

> And why thought ye for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these...Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.

A Buddhist priest, Ron Nakasone is Professor of Buddhist Studies at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA. His most recent book is The Ethics of Enlightenment.

Gasan said, "Whoever uttered those words I consider an enlightened man." The student continued:

> Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

Gasan remarked, "That is excellent. Whoever said that is not far from Buddhahood."

Impressed, Gasan remarked that Jesus is an enlightened man and that he is close to Buddhahood, a spiritually gifted individual. Jesus asks that we consider the splendor of the lilies of the fields and trust the instincts and beauty of our humanity. The intrinsic nobility of the human spirit is more admirable and beautiful than even the riches King Solomon had acquired. Buddhists hold a similar attitude. "All humans possess a nature that has an affinity for Enlightenment" (*The Teaching of the Buddha.*) This nature, the Buddha-nature, that is believed to be intrinsic to all beings, is endowed with the virtues of purity, compassion, wisdom and the like. In the second passage read to Gasan, Jesus speaks of a spiritual quickening. Unless one seeks spiritual insight, that insight will not be forthcoming. The answer lies in the question. The person who asks and seeks is ready to receive what is asked for and sought. A Buddhist proverb says that "when you are ready" a teacher appears. The teacher or answer is always present; but unless the seeker is ready, he or she is unable to recognize the teacher.

This anecdote reveals a commonality between Jesus' spirituality and insight and the Buddhist's. The passages from the Book of Matthew reveal Jesus' belief in the intrinsic goodness of humanity, a belief that Buddhists share. It is this commonality, I believe, that Gasan appreciated. Gasan's recognition of Jesus' spirituality is all the more remarkable in light of scholars' belief that these passages contain the actual words spoken by Jesus.

The Book of Q

Burton L. Mack, in the *Lost Gospel: the Book of Q and Christian Origins* has laboriously reconstructed what is believed to be the

original gospel of Jesus compiled by his followers during his lifetime. The Book of Q is a collection of sayings and aphorisms that reveals a remarkable individual who was intent on transforming the manner in which people would conduct their lives and see the world. His followers viewed him as a teacher. Jesus' teaching made it possible for them to cope with living in a troubled era. Jesus called for living the authentic life even in the midst of confusing times.

Jesus and his earliest followers, according to Mack, offered society an alternative vision to the values that prevailed at the time. He questioned the legitimacy of those in control of wealth and power, their moral codes, their prejudices, and their scorn of intermarriages. Jesus and his movement were critical of the unfair and unjust advantages power wielded against the poor and those dispossessed of authority, and concerned for the well-being of all. Jesus called for social justice and advocated a more equitable society. He asked people to think of themselves as belonging to a larger human family, a view which radically challenged traditional values and loyalties.

I am certain that the Buddha and Buddhists can accept much, if not all, of what Jesus proposed. The Buddha himself voiced many of the same challenges. The Buddha challenged the hierarchical social structure that exploited the poor and women, and the tyranny of the ritual codes that spiritually disenfranchised all but the Brahman priests. The Jesus movement's call for a more inclusive vision of the human family echoes the Buddha's acceptance of outcasts and women into the Sangha (Buddhist community.) Jesus, like the Buddha, worked to empower and uplift the poor and the dispossessed. Jesus and Buddha believed in the essential dignity and nobility of all humanity.

Soon after his birth the Buddha articulated the nobility of humanity. According to Buddhist lore, the infant Siddhartha took seven steps in the four directions, and with one hand pointing to heaven and the earth below, proclaimed, "In the heavens above and the earth below, I am holy; I will deliver humanity from suffering." The Buddha was not declaring divinity. Instead he was speaking for all humanity. All beings are holy; all beings possess the Buddha-nature; all beings have a responsibility to

deliver humanity from suffering. For the Buddha and for Buddhists the holy life is the authentic life, a life of personal integrity, purity of mind, and compassion.

The Authentic Life

Jesus' call for the authentic life is simply an appeal for living a life of personal integrity. For Jesus the authentic life meant conducting one's life in accordance with the spiritual vision of fairness, justice, and treating others with equanimity. He asked that we not compromise our spiritual principles to political or financial pressures; our actions should not be for personal gain; or as the Buddha would have probably said, our actions should not be clouded by our ego. Jesus also asked that we advocate justice by challenging tyrannical and unjust laws. Jesus asked that we live a life of joy. A life of joy is possible in difficult times, if we believe in the essential nobility of humanity. To live the authentic life is to live with uncompromising honesty in the belief that each individual is noble.

Jesus' message is echoed in the teaching of the authentic life by Shinran, the thirteenth century Japanese cleric. For Shinran the authentic life is crystallized in his teaching of the *sanshin* or the three minds, three aspects of mind which characterize the mind of faith. They are: *shishin, shingyo*, and *yokusho*. According to Shinran, *shishin* or "sincere mind," refers to the mind that is true, real, and sincere. *Shingyo* or "sincere faith" is a compound made up of *shin* (faith) and *gyo* (pleasure). *Shin* means "true," "real," "sincere," "full," and "utmost." *Gyo* means "desire," "aspiration," "appreciation," "rejoicing," "delight," and "joy." Thus *shingyo* means "joyous faith." *Yokusho* or "the desire to be born [in the Pure Land]" combines *yoku* and *sho*. *Yoku* means "vow," "aspiration," "awakening," and "realization." *Sho* means "accomplishment," "making," "doing," and "arising." For Shinran, the three minds describe a mind that is free from delusion; it is a mind devoid of perversion, and a mind that is without doubt. The three—sincere mind, joyous faith, and the aspiration to be born in the Pure Land (the realization of Enlightenment)—describe the mind requisite for a life of spiritual and personal integrity.

A Personal Matter

For Jesus and Buddha the spiritual life is characterized by personal integrity, a sense of justice, and joy. Jesus lived as he believed. The Buddha demonstrated the validity of his *Dharma* (teaching) through example. He asked that those who were attracted to him see for themselves if his way to liberation worked for them, and only then should they accept his teaching. Shinran, the Japanese cleric, accepted the Buddha's *Dharma* with a sense of uncompromising honesty. In his gatha, *Ondokusan* (Hymn of Compassion), Shinran sings of his gratitude to Amida's Great Compassion and to the Masters of the *Dharma*. Shinran asks for a total commitment to the spiritual life. He dedicates his entire being and his total efforts. Shinran's dedication to the *Dharma* and *Dharma* masters is a personal commitment. Such dedication is most praiseworthy, but not unusual. Personal dedication takes on many forms. Tamagusuku Setsuko, an exponent of Ryukyu classical dance, commits her entire efforts to her art. The journalist, Tatsuno Kazuo writes of Ms. Tamagusuku's "uncompromising honesty." She does not even bat an eyelid as she moves ever so slowly towards the rear of the stage with her back to the audience when she performs *Nufubushi*, one of the premier dances of the Ryukyu classical repertoire. He continues,

> Considering that no one...would ever be aware even if she did blink, I asked her why she didn't. She replied that it was a personal matter, but that she would somehow feel her back exposed and defenseless were she to blink. She said that such self-deception was out of the question. It might be possible to deceive the audience, but not oneself: 'In the final analysis the decision has to be a personal one. You can't lie to yourself.'

This is surely an example of "uncompromising honesty." Ms. Tamagusuku's "uncompromising honesty" is a personal matter. She believed that any compromise exposed her back and left her

defenseless. To be sure, no one would climb on to the stage and strike her exposed back; but Ms. Tamagusuku equated her dance with her life and being. To cheat by blinking with her back to the audience would go unnoticed. To renege on her commitment to her art would have violated the integrity of the dance. Her armor of honesty would have been penetrated. We may be able to fool others, but we cannot fool ourselves. I admire Ms. Tamagusuku's uncompromising honesty. The authentic life, a life of uncompromising honesty, is a personal commitment.

I am certain that uncompromising honesty in their beliefs was a deeply personal matter for Jesus, the Buddha, and Shinran. Their followers, no doubt, were drawn to their personal integrity. The Buddha's commitment to living the authentic life of uncompromising honesty is reflected in Shinran's dedication to Amida Buddha and the *Dharma* masters. Shinran's dedication to the Buddha's *Dharma* was a personal one. Hopefully, each of us will be able to live, or at least try to approximate, the authentic life by living a life of uncompromising honesty. Though we may admire the virtue, there are risks. Jesus' uncompromising honesty cost him his life; Shinran was exiled; the Buddha risked his life, family, and kingdom. These individuals saw the value in each person and in so doing challenged the prevailing societal norms. They chose not to float with the prevailing winds. The authentic life, the life of uncompromising honesty, does not assure fame or wealth. No one, except yourself, may ever know of your efforts. Such dedication is a personal matter. ■

In August

I love the chariot clouds
with their stormy gray horses
and night clouds amid star plankton
pods of blue whale.

I love the apple glow
of the sun at daybreak
and the star silt shining
on clusters of moss.

I love the morning coolness
of oak steeped shade
and the vow of silence
in branches of spruce.

I love the solitude
in the rain thin spaces
between blades of grass
and the toad sitting
in the rumpled shadow of a stone.

I love the sounds of the cicada
crimping waters of the pond
and the scarlet tanager lingering long
on a limb of thought.

I love the burning shadows of lilies
after the noon
and the wobbly butterfly
in the slippery sunlight.

I love the scattered songs of the sparrows
that reach deep into my heart
as though my heart
were the earth's.

June Moreau

A widely published poet, artist, and mountaineer, June Moreau is known for the exceptional power and grace of the images she creates. She makes her home in Lexington, MA.

Golden Rules

This is the sum of all righteousness: do nothing to your neighbor which you would not have him do to you after.

Hinduism

Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.

Buddhism

Surely it is a maxim of loving-kindness; do not to others that which you would not have them do to you.

Confucianism

Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss.

Taoism

What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow men. That is the entire Law, the rest is commentary.

Judaism

Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law of the prophets.

Christianity

No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.

Islam

As you deem yourself, so deem others. Then you shall become a partner in heaven.

Sikhism

From *The Gift of Prayer,* a publication of Fellowship in Prayer.

A Secret Reason for Being

MARY C. BILDERBACK

This writer says, "The universe by everyone's best guess is a great silk web, spun spontaneously, continuously by a dancing, delirious, devouring God." Enjoy her view of a microcosm of creativity.

I've been keeping an eye on a spider web, in the corner of the pew in front of me, this week at morning Mass. It seems to have gotten a dispensation of sorts to remain there, despite a band of energetic, spiritual ladies who blitz the place each morning before the 9:00 o'clock Mass.

It's not a particularly noteworthy construction. In fact, it's more of a cobweb, a generic sort of spider activity, one you would, never see in a textbook of Aracnid; long forgotten by the artist herself like someone's high school poetry.

It doesn't sparkle in the sunlight that angles through the stained glass window, but it swings a bit in the breeze I create, standing and kneeling as the program demands.

It must have a secret reason for being there, beyond beauty, beyond function, beyond any more hope than of being obliterated one day by a feather duster, or the hand of a child chinning herself on the back of the pew to keep her parents awake.

In fact, it isn't even ugly, or shockingly displeasing, in the midst of all the sacred splendor, polished wood and vaulted ceilings, gleaming crosses, graceful chalices, eager communicants, glowing with a brand new day in their hearts and songs.

It's just there, filling in a corner of one pew, not saying anything at all, without pomp or circumstance or message. I've thought of bending down close to see if it were whispering anything small, but I'm not certain I want to know, or if it is my place to ask, or what I would do with this information anyway.

What I do know is this. I greet it every morning and wonder how it passed the night, and if it will last another day, if anyone else has seen it and would guard it with her life as I would.

Sometimes I imagine it is the stirring of a soul long lost to

Mary C. Bilderback lives on an island six miles out a sea and is "fastened by day" to a college where she works.

prayer, summoning all its courage to rejoice again. Perhaps it is the small beginning of an Easter basket, or a prayer shawl a nun might wear at vespers, or an off, off Broadway meditation in the wilderness, gathering force and elegance to bring down the house some Sunday morning. I want to be there.

I'd like to meet the artist who left it in such a frame. I will miss it when it's gone. ■

Darlene Prestbo

Divine Assistance

HENRY STARK

During a critical health crisis, this writer's practice of daily meditation brought spiritual focus and unleashed a generous supply of divine healing to his body and mind.

The kinds of physical problems I've experienced over the past 57 years have routinely been cured by taking two aspirin and lying down for half an hour. On November 12, 1994, all that changed.

I was visiting a new dentist, Dr. Robert Thomas, who had a panoramic x-ray machine. My previous dentist didn't have access to this relatively new technology. Dr. Thomas asked me to sit for a full-mouth x-ray for reference purposes. When the picture was developed and he had had time to analyze it, he gave me an ominous warning, "You've got to see an oral surgeon right away! You have a very large lesion in your jaw and I'm sure there's a tumor growing in there. It's a certainty that you'll have to have major surgery immediately that will probably leave you without a jawbone on the left side and not enough muscle to be able to ever chew or talk normally."

As I digested these unexpected words, I could feel the blood rush into my head and terror invade my whole being. Instinctively I wanted to deny: the x-ray was switched with another patient, it wasn't mine, or it might be mine but Dr. Thomas was a general dentist and was reading it wrong. Viscerally I felt negative feelings driving me toward panic while logically I grasped for thoughts and ideas to cling to which would reverse everything he was saying.

Visits to two oral surgeons and a hospital CT scan confirmed the diagnosis. In fact, the lesion was the largest either surgeon had ever seen and both told me that my jawbone was so thin that they would have to fracture it during the surgical procedure. There was no way that it could be fully reconstructed although they would do their best, using bone from my hips and space age metals. I was left with the prospect of multiple surgeries. The thought of spending the rest

Henry Stark resides in Connecticut and spent the last year teaching marketing and business at the Herefordshire College of Technology in England. He retired from Levi-Strauss in 1993 to pursue his love of teaching and writing.

of my life in speech therapy classes, drinking through a straw, and presenting the world three-quarters of a normal face was horrifying to me and I had to come to grips with it.

Life was dealing me a hand but I told myself that it didn't have to be a bad hand if I didn't perceive it that way. We all encounter a wide variety of circumstances but an experience that comes our way is never labeled "good" or "bad." It is up to each of us how we react. We control our own attitudes and thoughts. A tumor in my jaw and subsequent surgeries did not, in and of themselves, have to be bad experiences. I knew that I was a spiritual being. There had been times in my life when I had experienced the direct presence of The Infinite.

The time had come for me to connect my belief in spirituality with living in the physical world. Lemonade out of lemons, stepping stones out of stumbling blocks, all the buzzwords of the eighties and nineties flowed through my brain. I thought of all the positive philosophies I had been exposed to from the bookshelves in the sociology, philosophy, and psychology sections of bookstores. It gradu-

Henry Stark

ally dawned on me...this was IT—it was my time NOW to make it work for me or not. Only I could control my feelings and attitude. I could try to find the best surgeons and they would do their best physical work. They, in effect, were Body. I was going to be Mind.

I have always believed in meditation but I am not a good candidate for it. Being an intense personality, I am always thinking and talking to myself. My mind is never at rest. I had tried meditation on my own in a desultory way over the years but had only succeeded in frustrating myself. Faced with the physical reality presented to me by my dentist and the surgeons, I decided to commit myself to a regular daily program of a morning and afternoon session. My wife, who had been practicing meditation for years, joined me. She visualized a mini construction crew inside my jaw, layering rows of bone in the area where the x-rays showed no bone. I relied on a relaxation tape to get me to a centered position and then imagined myself drawing blood up from my legs to revitalize my lower left jaw. Twice, I actually felt my jaw tingle.

We meditated twice a day for thirty days. I found myself going to deeper levels the more I meditated and I "lasted" for longer durations. I listened to tapes and read and reread passages in books about the mind-body connection. I immersed myself in a spiritual consciousness and my mental reflections centered on positive attitudes.

My oral surgeon had allotted 30 minutes on November 22 to perform a biopsy. It took him twice as long to drill two "windows" through the jawbone. He was startled and confused by the thickness of the bone and told me later that the panoramic x-ray and the many images of the CT scan failed to show how much bone I had. He indicated that this was the first time in his 33-year practice that x-rays had misled him. My wife and I knew that we had "grown" the extra bone!

We continued our program of meditation and when the time came for the removal of the tumor and the "harvesting" of bone from both hips to be used for jaw reconstruction, my surgeon found that bone from one hip was enough and that no metal reinforcement was needed. I stayed three days in the hospital instead of the seven originally predicted.

After I had been home for a short time, I developed complications as a result of being under a general anesthetic in the hospital for over five hours. It meant another trip to the same hospital for a third operation. When I heard the news, a wave of despondency swept over me and I let myself get very depressed for the first couple of days. I turned my thinking around by concentrating on some very basic and evident truths.

I knew that, left alone, the body heals itself. Cells rebuild and renew themselves, cuts and scrapes heal and disappear, broken bones knit together when they are immobilized, black and shriveled smoker's lungs return to their original color and size when no longer exposed to tar and nicotine. Health is normal. Sickness is an aberration brought on by something unnatural. If God has a plan, it's obvious that health is part of it; sickness is not. Believing this, I didn't have to fight sickness, I just had to put myself into a consciousness where God could heal.

I believed that my wife and I had been effective in growing bone in my jaw and I knew intuitively that I was developing the spiritual strength to cope with another surgery.

I had a total of three surgeries in three months and recovered well from each. Six months after the original diagnosis I was back to my omniverous eating habits and chatting away as if nothing unusual had happened. My beard covers all signs of surgery although I still have some paralysis of my lower left jaw. My wife tells me she enjoys my "crooked smile."

I am very grateful that I was able to receive outstanding medical care at a time when I really believe I needed it. But my greatest fulfillment comes from knowing that my wife and I, with our spiritual focus, were able to lessen the harmful effects of the tumor by letting in a generous supply of natural, divine healing. My whole outlook on life is enriched. I feel that I have made significant progress in learning how to tap into God's healing energy. If I receive some "bad" physical news in the future I'll be in much better shape to handle it. ■

Carl G. Karsch

A Prayer for the Summer

LYNN V. ANDREWS

Great Mother, as we see you
At the heart of our world,
We give thanks to you for our life force,
And the gifts of our physical being.
With this gift of life,
You have presented us with the mirrors of existence
That elevate our soul toward the highest light.
Every day we are faced with these reflections,
And they bring us great pain and great joy.
In our pain, we forget we are on a great journey.
We struggle within the confines of our ignorance,
Desperately searching for a way
To tear away the veils that cloud our vision.
Great Mother, help us on our journey of discovery.
Give us power to continue to seek.
Help us find joy and courage,
As we navigate through the dense fog of confusion.
Help us, Great Mother, to understand you needs,
And what it takes to heal your precious body.
In our commitment to you,
We make a commitment to ourselves,
To our own enlightenment,
To our own process of forgiveness and wisdom.
In this forgiveness, I make a pledge from my heart,
To find an end to this weakness and pain,
To find a harmony and balance,
So that we may more successfully walk
With a foot in the physical and a foot in spirit.
Oh Great Mother, I humble myself to your power.
At this moment, I visualize golden white light

Lynn V. Andrews is the best-selling author of over 14 books on self discovery and feminine spirituality. From Walk in Spirit: Prayers for the Seasons of Life by Lynn V. Andrews, 1996, pgs. 32–33. Reprinted by permission of Acacia Publishing Corp.

Surrounding me and enabling me to move
Into my shaman center, into my place of power,
A perfect reflection of your innocence.
I see the shield that you carry
Shining like a beacon in the darkness.
Your shield is made of trust and faith:
Trust that each and every one of us will build
A rainbow bridge across the abyss of darkness.
Faith symbolized by each of us crossing that bridge,
Held forever in your light.
Great Mother, we give thanks for your blessings. Ho!

Robert F. Campbell

We regularly receive and periodically reprint letters from our readers. We also want to provide information to link spiritual seekers with events and information about the spiritual life. As space allows, we will pass on helpful tidbits. Send correspondence to "Letters and Links" *at* Fellowship in Prayer. *We cannot print everything and events highlighted will be used at the discretion of the editor. Please provide information at least three months in advance of events.*

"First of all *Fellowship in Prayer* has made these past two years more bearable while I've been in prison, and I'd like to thank whoever made it possible for me to receive it. The articles have been very uplifting.

Secondly, I am about to be released and would like to continue to receive it. I also intend on sending a check in the near future (as soon as I return to work) to help offset your costs in bringing the word to those in need."

Name withheld; Altamont, NY

"I have loved reading *Fellowship in Prayer* for years. It truly nurtures my soul. Its simple and clear purpose of supporting prayerful spiritual growth is strong, and I am grateful to be part of this extended family."

B.F.; Palo Alto, CA

Prayer is the most popular religious subject for readers according to a recent survey conducted by *Publishers Weekly*. The *Praying with the Bible* series by Eugene H. Peterson took top honors.

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, INC.

291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08542-3227
office - (609) 924-6863
fax - (609) 924-6910

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Paul Walsh

EDITOR
Rebecca Laird

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Linda D. Baumann

TRUSTEES
Kathryn G. Brown
President Emeritus, Co-founder
Paul Walsh
President
Howard S. Ende
Vice President
Treasurer
Frederick J. Olessi
Vice President
Secretary
Rabbi Samuel M. Silver
Vice President Emeritus
Rev. Dr. Arthur Caliandro
Werner Mark Linz
Charles Lunnin
Ven. Gelongma Trime Lhamo
Lorraine Sciarra
Rev. Dr. Joseph C. Williamson

IN MEMORIAM
Carl Allison Evans (1880-1956)
Founder
Paul Griffith (1921-1983)
Editor

© Copyright 1996 by Fellowship in Prayer.

Material in this publication is copyrighted and may not be reproduced by photocopy or any other means without written permission.

This book is printed on acid-free recycled paper.

Vol. 47, No. 4

ADVISORS

Dr. Marjorie Bankson
The Rev. Dr. Thomas Berry
Mother Tessa Bielecki
The Rev. Dr. Harvey Cox
Dr. Joan Halifax
The Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh
Sheila Holtgrieve
Ram Kolluri
Dr. Daniel Martin
The Very Rev. Dr. James Parks Morton
Elizabeth Ostuni
Virginia Prescott
The Rev. Hazel Staats-Westover
Anne Walsh

For six bimonthly issues of *Fellowship in Prayer*, send $16 to Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542-3227. Free subscriptions are available for those unable to pay.

We welcome articles on prayer, meditation, spiritual experience, religious faith or practices, and similar topics.Preference is given to experiential manuscripts. Manuscripts should not exceed 1500 words, should be typed, double spaced, on a 8 ½ by 11 inch paper, or on a 5 ¼ inch floppy minidisk, 2S/2D, or 2S/HD, or on a 3 ½ HD microdisks, in WordPerfect and sent to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542-3227. Please include a brief biography.

This publication is made possible by the generous contributions of our readers and the generosity of the late Eli Lilly.

We are often asked to share names and addresses with other non-profit spiritual organizations whose work might be of interest to you. If that's not all right with you, please drop us a note and we will withhold your name.

ISSN 0014-9837

FELLOWSHIP IN
PRAYER

291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08542

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Princeton, NJ
Permit No. 415

Address Correction Requested

For A World United in Prayer